

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 258835

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINR, CB

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON US RECONNAISSANCE

FLIGHTS AND AMERICAN RECOMMENDATIONS ON BOMBING

TARGETS

1. WASHINGTON POST OF NOVEMBER 22 CARRIED ARTICLE (BEING SENT BY WIRELESS FILE) BY JOHN BURGESS DATELINED BANGKOK WHICH BEGAN: "AMERICAN MILITARY ANALYSTS ARE MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON BOMBING TARGETS IN COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREAS OF CAMBODIA TO THE MILITARY COMMAND IN PHNOM PENH, ACCORDING TO A WELL-PLACED US MILITARY SOURCE". ARTICLE SPECULATES THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON DAILY AERIAL RECON FLIGHTS MAY BE VIOLATION OF CONGRESSIONAL BAN OF A DIRECT US MILITARY ROLE IN CAMBODIA. ARTICLE FURTHER BRIEFLY STATES THAT US PLANES FROM THAILAND AND OKINAWA ALSO CARRY OUT RECON FLIGHTS OVER NORTH VIETNAM AND LAOS.

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2. AT BOTH DOD AND STATE PRESS BRIEFING NOVEMBER 22,

QUESTIONS ASKED ONLY ABOUT CAMBODIA. DOD PRESS SPOKESMAN REPLIED TO PRESS QUERIES THAT "WE ARE STILL CHECKING INTO IT." IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT IT COULD BE ASSUMED THAT INFORMATION FROM RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS, IF THEY ARE FLOWN, WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE GKR, THE SPOKESMAN REPLIED THIS WAS A FAIR ASSUMPTION BUT COULD NOT BE CONFIRMED. THE SPOKESMAN REPLIED TO ANOTHER

QUESTION SAYING THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER OR NOT AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH ACTED AS A CONTROL AND COMMAND CENTER FOR SUCH INFORMATION.

3. NOON BRIEFING ON SUBJECT AT DEPARTMENT WENT ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: ASKED BY WP'S MARDER TO COMMENT ON REPORTS THAT US PLANES ARE FLYING RECONNAISSANCE AND DIRECTING BOMBING OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA IN APPARENT VIOLATION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BAN ON US MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SEA, HARE REFERRED "THAT GENERAL QUESTION" TO DOD. MARDER PERSISTED THAT, ACCORDING TO THE STORY, THE REPORTS WERE PASSED ON APPARENTLY TO EMBASSY PP, "WHICH WOULD BE A STATE DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY - DO YOU WANT DOD ALSO TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANSWERING THAT QUESTION?" HARE RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. DAVIS (AP) ASKED IF THE AMBASSADOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ACTIONS THAT TAKE PLACE INVOLVING AMERICANS WITHIN THE COUNTRY. WHEN HARE REPLIED THAT THE AMBASSADOR "HAS OVER-ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL US ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA", MARDER ASKED WHY, THEN, DOS WILL NOT RESPOND TO THE QUESTION. HARE SAID HE WAS REFERRING IT TO DOD BECAUSE "I UNDERSTAND THEY DID RECEIVE SOME QUESTIONS ON THIS STORY THIS MORNING AND WERE GOING TO PROVIDE COMMENT."

4. CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST HAS ALSO BEEN VOICED IN THE STORY.

5. COMMENT: WE AND DOD SHALL KEEP YOU INFORMED OF EVENTUAL REPLIES TO QUERIES. INGERSOLL

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